

Status Report:

Environmental Common Sense Committee (ECSC)
Servicing Communities: Area of Impact Subcommittee
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The Subcommittee has not met since July 2004. At a previous ECSC meeting, it was agreed that the issues originally charged to subcommittee needed to be divided into long-term land use planning via an ad hoc committee comprised primarily of cities and counties which has not met. The second part would remain a subcommittee function focusing on the environmental component directed to address:

- Regionalization of municipal wastewater (may include storm drainage)
- Decentralized waste treatment systems vs. septic systems

In discussion with the Chair of the ECSC, the need exists to clearly define and frame the issues regarding municipal wastewater issues, wastewater reuse, regionalization, as well as decentralized waste treatment systems in and around areas of impact that needs to be shared with all of our partners in industry and local government. The environmental issues are complex in consideration of relevant laws, rules and regulations that govern and impact development in rural and urban settings. The issues grow even more complex in respect to development in high growth areas as the Treasure Valley, Blaine County, Bonneville-Bingham County, Teton County, Valley County, and Kootenai County.

As such, it is vital that the subcommittee work with existing city and county organizations to schedule a comprehensive issues education forum at annual conferences where the opportunity exists to clearly define pertinent issues and to concisely define the magnitude and extent of the problems. The outcome of educating local elected officials will be to challenge local elected officials to develop a path forward to incorporate better use of existing resources to shape the future of Idaho's ability to manage and protect critical environmental resources. The need to have frank discussions about groundwater protection, storm water drainage requirements, surface water quality and the associated TMDLs, as well as how water resource issues like aquifer recharge need to be primary considerations in decisions made in the future.

It is very obvious that Idaho can learn what to do --- and what not to do based on experiences in other states. It would be important to share with city and county leaders the Oregon experience, of restrictive land use planning laws and recently adopted takings provisions, so that Idaho may strive to find a balance between resource protection and land use planning. It would also be wise to share the history of the development and infrastructure problems in the five county Minneapolis/St Paul metro area where substantive and serious issues were created and had to be resolved at great taxpayer expense as the result of not appropriately dealing with environmental infrastructure issues early on when the opportunities were available.

It would also be wise to share some of the very successful efforts taking place in Idaho where communities are working together to approach regional infrastructure needs in new innovative ways. Much can be learned from efforts in:

- Eastern Idaho: Firth-Basalt-Shelley-Ammon and Idaho Falls Regionalization with 5 cities, two major industries in two counties.
- Victor-Driggs: Regionalization/consolidation to one treatment facility serving two cities 7 miles apart.
- City of Boise: Long term master planning for the city and multiple sewer districts in a rapidly urbanizing area.
- City of Post Falls: Planning for the future, NPDES or WLAP over a sole source aquifer.

The primary message to be shared with the city and county associations would be a message asking cities to take the lead and asking counties to allow cities to work through the issues in a practical and common sense approach to solving these issues to the economic benefit of the citizens we serve.

The Subcommittee will contact and urge the Idaho Association of Counties and the Association of Idaho Cities to schedule educational forums during their annual meetings in 2005.